

Archives Advice No. 6

What Does It Mean to Manage Records?

Considerations for Government Officials

Record Keepers versus Records Managers

Managing records is different from record keeping, or custodianship. A record keeper:

- Has physical custody; and,
- Protects, preserves, and provides the records to those who need them, and are authorized to use them.

In contrast, a records manager generally:

- Deals with information in the custody of others; and,
- Prescribes practices to provide protection, preservation, and access as appropriate to the value and life span of the records and the needs and resources of the organization.

In other words, record keepers put into effect the policies and procedures that records management develops. In practice, some records managers do both management and record keeping. Ideally, records management provides continuity and consistency to the record keeping practices of an agency while balancing its record keeping resources. Too many times, there are pockets of good-to-excellent record keeping within an agency but little management.

The earmarks of good records management are:

- A consciously designed system that integrates record keeping practices across media
- The management of records for the **entire agency** and not a single program
- An understanding of the function of records and information
- A consciousness of costs relating to records storage and reformatting
- An understanding of the implications, impact and limitations of technology
- A recognition of the value of records and allocation of resources accordingly
- An understanding of how the value of records and information changes over time
- The incorporation of policies and procedures developed by records management into the daily business processes of the agency

Good record keeping throughout an agency does not just happen. It might happen in one area because of an outstanding individual. However, for an agency to have good records management, well-thought-out practices must become part of the agency's routine. Part of management is analyzing, thinking, and developing practices that meet the agency's need for well-kept records. These practices must also be commensurate with agency resources, and be practices that properly trained people are willing to use.

If you need further assistance, please call the Georgia Archives at (678) 364-3790.

Version: 3

Revised: April 2008



GEORGIA ARCHIVES

KAREN HANDEL, SECRETARY OF STATE
DAVID W. CARMICHEAL, DIRECTOR